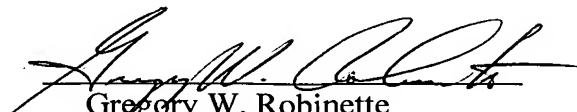


REMARKS

New independent Claim 21 defines the invention as a method of forming a vehicle trim component having a surface feature. Initially, a first vehicle trim component portion is introduced into a mold assembly including a first mold portion having a textured surface and a second mold portion. The first and second mold portions are moved toward one another so as to cause the mold assembly to preliminarily deform the first vehicle trim component. Then, a second vehicle trim component portion is introduced into the mold assembly so as to finally deform the first vehicle trim component portion into engagement with the textured surface of the first mold portion, thereby forming a vehicle trim component having a surface feature.

The claimed invention is not shown or suggested in any of the art of record. Specifically, the Kato et al. reference discloses a method of transferring a grain pattern from an inner surface of a mold to a laminate by drawing the laminate to the inner surface of the mold by a vacuum. Molten thermoplastic material is then injected into a space formed between a back surface of the laminate and the mold. Therefore, the Kato et al. reference does not show or suggest the claimed step of moving the first and second mold portions toward one another so as to cause the mold assembly to preliminarily deform the first vehicle trim component. Similarly, the Yabe et al. reference discloses a process for producing a resin molded article having a pattern formed on its surface. A polycarbonate sheet is first cut and bent into a predetermined shape, as shown in Fig. 2. The bent sheet is then fitted into the mold, as shown in Fig. 3, and polycarbonate resin material is injected into the mold. The Yabe et al. reference therefore does not show or suggest the claimed step of moving the first and second mold portions toward one another so as to cause the mold assembly to preliminarily deform the first vehicle trim component.

Respectfully submitted,


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